



Group formed to aid fisheries

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By Jin Zhu (China Daily)

A nationwide distant-water fisheries association was established on Tuesday in response to increasing competition worldwide and declining domestic fishing resources.

"China consumption of aquatic products has been growing in recent years amid the rising population and rapid urbanization. However, the country's capacity on overseas fisheries is still lagging, compared with world levels," said Han Changfu, minister of agriculture.

He made the remarks at the inaugural meeting of the China Overseas Fisheries Association in Beijing on Tuesday.

The nonprofit association has attracted 150 members, including Chinese fisheries and other companies, according to a statement from the association.

"The establishment of the association is expected to promote closer cooperation among fishery companies to further expand the overseas market," he said.

China has 116 companies engaged in distant-water fisheries, and nearly 2,000 fishing vessels with various types of fishing gear have been put into use, the statement said.

The fishing area covers exclusive economic zones of 37 countries with agreements with China, mostly in West Africa, such as Mauritania and Morocco, as well as high seas of the Pacific, Atlantic, Indian oceans and the Antarctic, the association said.

At present, the total annual catch from distant water is about 1.15 million tons, valued at 12.6 billion yuan (\$1.98 billion), the association said.

Officials said China has experienced rapid growth in its fishery industry in recent years, with increasing aquatic product output and prices, as well as soaring exports.

The country's aquatic product output hit 56 million tons last year, up 4.2 percent, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. China's exports of aquatic products approached \$17.8 billion last year, accounting for nearly 30 percent of its total agricultural product exports, according to the General Administration of Customs.

Meanwhile, fishery harvests now greatly rely on the booming captive breeding, as the country's wild fishing resources are declining.

For example, China plans to increase its annual aquatic product output to 60 million tons in 2015, more than 75 percent of which will come from captive breeding, according to the Ministry of Agriculture.

"More than 90 percent of Chinese companies engaged in distant-water fisheries are private and small, which are weak on fishing capacity," Niu Dun, vice-minister of agriculture and president of the association, was quoted as saying in an article in Farmers' Daily on Tuesday.

"More technological input and government financing support are urgently needed by the companies to boost their fishery capacities, such as building ports, cold storages and processing factories," he said.

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